

School of Theology at Claremont



1001 1370852

RELIGIOUS RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SOCIAL ORDER

A Symposium by Three Theologians

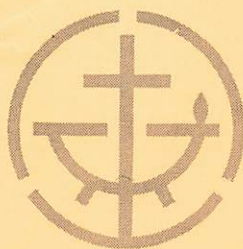
Jaroslav Pelikan

Gustave Weigel

Emil L. Fackenheim

BV
630.2
N3
1962

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CHRISTIANS AND JEWS



Theology Library

SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY
AT CLAREMONT
California

From the library of

DONALD JARMAN

RELIGIOUS RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE SOCIAL ORDER

A Symposium by Three Theologians

1-17

13002

1/3

1942

Jaroslav Pelikan

Gustave Weigel

Emil L. Fackenheim

NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CHRISTIANS AND JEWS

Theology Library

SCHOOL OF THEOLOG
AT CLAREMONT
California

INTRODUCTION

There is sharp division among the American people concerning religion's responsibility for shaping the social order.

For example, a study conference organized by the National Council of Churches spoke out on the issue of the admission of Red China to the United Nations. Immediately, other respected church leaders and citizens concerned with religion's role in public affairs questioned this action. In whose name do church leaders speak when they resolve on political issues? Can they claim to speak for religion? Should religion "meddle" with "politics"? Is it not rather religion's duty to preach "sin and salvation"?

Some of the very same church groups that criticized the National Council of Churches' Study Order Conference, on the other hand, do applaud the very active role clergy and local churches play in winning legislative restrictions on the serving of alcoholic beverages on airplanes or the licensing of Bingo games. Is the issue then one of what are your politics? How do we decide what issues are "moral" and what issues "political"?

Church leaders have been called upon to engage in study and action against Communism. If this is a proper obligation then, should not the church also study and take action with regard to the social problems on which Communism feeds and festers?

If the church is to be concerned with the social order, in what way ought it protect itself from becoming just another secular political pressure group? In what ways must the church remain the church as against the state?

Questions such as these need clarifying light, if religion is to serve as a unifying force for American citizens, and if we are not to be needlessly divided one against another.

At its Annual Meeting, therefore, recently held in Washington, D.C., the National Conference of Christians and Jews invited three distinguished clergymen to speak on those questions:

Dr. Jaroslav Pelikan, Professor of Historical Theology,
The University of Chicago

Father Gustave Weigel, S.J., Professor of Ecclesiology,
Woodstock College, Woodstock, Md.

Rabbi Emil L. Fackenheim, Professor of Philosophy,
University of Toronto, Ontario, Canada

The text contains their transcribed remarks. It includes also excerpts from the discussion from the floor. This pamphlet is an introduction to a broad, complex subject; it is hoped, however, that it will stimulate further thought and discussion.

This pamphlet is published as part of the National Conference of Christians and Jews project, Religious Freedom and Public Affairs.

Arthur Gilbert
Staff Consultant

Address of Dr. Jaroslav Pelikan

A PROTESTANT VIEW

In America one can be a Protestant without being a Christian. The absence of personal commitment, which the evangelical Protestantism of America has traditionally identified as a weakness of both Roman Catholicism and the Protestant establishments of the Old World, has come to characterize the religiosity of many Americans as well. If, for example, a Roman Catholic is running for the Presidency, the non-Christian Protestants may well identify themselves as Protestants. In practice, however, their faith is an uncommitted interest in spiritual values in general and therefore a studied non-involvement in the particularity of any religious tradition. They don't even stay away from one church in particular; they stay away from all churches in general.

Most of these Protestant but non-Christian Americans would probably put the Ten Commandments or the Sermon on the Mount into first place as the source and authority for their definition of the ethical life. Unreflective though this assignment of priorities may be in many instances, it does find historical support from the vast residue of biblical terms, concepts and sanctions in the value systems both of the man on the street and the moral philosopher. It is traditional for Americans to glory in the dependence of their American morality upon the Bible. Thomas Jefferson, after all, took it upon himself to prepare an expurgated edition of the Four Gospels, as a means of assuring, he said, that Indians and others would be able to base their morals upon the authentic teachings of Jesus. (That expurgated edition of the Four Gospels, by the way, was published by the Library of Congress. Since it was prepared by a former president, its publication was not mixing Church and State.) More recent presidents of both parties have continued the claim—perhaps from a mixture of conviction and expediency—that biblical precedent and precept were

the inspiration for their own political morality and for that of the American nation. Jefferson's domesticated version of the New Testament is likewise proof for the claim of those Americans who are Protestant but not Christian: that biblical morality may be separated from biblical doctrine. Deeds, not creeds, is only one of the many slogans by which this American tradition has sought to express its conviction that the moral teachings of Jesus, if they can be stripped of the doctrinal accretions that began with the Apostle Paul, summarize the best that men everywhere have discovered about the good life.

Careful historical research, so it was hoped, could crack the shell of the Bible, discard the husk of dogmatic theology and keep the kernel of moral truth within. Now that several generations of such research have performed their assignment, the result of their work is the disheartening discovery that for the teachings of Jesus the moral imperative was imbedded and grounded in his expectations and predictions about the coming of the Kingdom of God. What is more, although the synoptic gospels are often contrasted with the accretions added by later generations of the Christian community, these gospels themselves have been found to be the voice of the community as it remembered and celebrated the acts of God in Jesus the Christ. The Bible is consequently not a handbook of general, spiritual values but a testimony of the faith of the community in the acts of God. The presupposition of each of the Ten Commandments is the preface to the first of them: "I am the Lord, thy God, which hath brought thee out of the Land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." The Jesus from whose remembered sayings the Sermon on the Mount was collected was the focus of the Christian liturgy and the ground of the hope of the Christian community. For historical reasons alone, and according to the Bible itself, for more than historical reasons, biblical morality is inseparable from biblical doctrine and biblical doctrine is inseparable from the community of believers. If the faith is broken off from its context in the community, and if the

morality is broken off from its context in the faith, the result is a double fracture.

Although the morality may indeed be maintained for generations after both the community and its faith are gone, the Bible by itself is not enough to renew and reform the systems of value that have been drawn from it. Albert Camus says: "The problem of our time is 'How can a man become a saint without believing in God?'"

Two contrasting conclusions may be drawn from this historical analysis. It may be argued on the one hand that the case for the inseparability of biblical doctrine from the community of believers is based upon the so-called "genetic fallacy," the argument from origins. What Jesus taught, on the basis of his expectation that the end of the world was to come, may be valid even if one does not share that expectation. If an individual is told that he has six months to live and if he suddenly embarks upon moral reform as a result, he should stick to that resolve when surgery or drugs give him an unexpected reprieve. Thus, other grounds than the "dubious" metaphysics of the Bible or of the Trinitarian dogma may give better support to those elements of biblical morality that are the working value system of the American way of life. Similarly, on the other hand, other forms of common life than Israel or the Church may provide a more satisfactory matrix for our values. Now it seems to me that some such interpretation of religion in general is the conclusion to which many Americans both inside and outside the various religious traditions usually turn, when they are challenged to explain the contradiction between their protestations of religious loyalty to biblical morality, on the one hand, and their indifference or even hostility to other biblical teachings and to the continuing tradition of the community of belief.

I think such conclusions are wrong. For I think it is necessary to point out that the heritage of values bequeathed to us by Judaism and Christianity is being spent but not replenished, because the faith upon which those values were

based no longer animates many of those who profess the values. To be sure, the moral habits of centuries are not easily sloughed off. People may still live as though they believed. An individual or an entire culture may remain Protestant or Roman Catholic or Eastern Orthodox long after dogmatic faith and liturgical observance have vanished. I know Protestant pietists who still will not take a drink although they have not been in church many, many years, and the Friday abstinence is one of the last things to go in marginal and apostate Roman Catholics.

When, as now, however, the crisis of history puts a system of morality to the test, then such an individual or a culture discovers, often too late, that moral values do not come equipped with a "self-starter," but that they depend for their propulsion upon sources of power beyond themselves and beyond their own culture. In each succeeding crisis—since the Babylonian captivity of Israel—the prophets of religion have issued just that warning. The effectiveness of the warning is not necessarily proportionate to its validity. The future of moral and spiritual life in America may well depend upon which of these two conclusions shapes the thinking and the teaching of this and the next generation. Can morals be separated from the teaching of the book where they are recorded? Can the book be separated from the people of God where it arises? Neither churches nor schools nor agencies like this can finally avoid a confrontation with the question of the relation between the Book of God and the People of God.

Address of Father Gustave Weigel, S.J.

A CATHOLIC VIEW

In this paper I intend to review what has been said at length elsewhere. I shall speak from the Christian viewpoint, although not all Christians will agree with me. The title, "The Responsibility of Religion for the Social Order" was given to me—I did not choose it. If the social order under discussion is the social order within one particular church, then obviously the church is wholly and exclusively responsible for that social order. This needs no discussion except within the confines of that church alone. I suppose that the social order under consideration here is the *secular* order in which all men live no matter what church they belong to, if any. In this hypothesis, the social order is a constituent element of secular society. The Christian view as I see it preaches that secular society is a distinct reality from the church which is a *sacral* society. What happens in the secular society cannot be the responsibility of the church unless by mutual contract this phase of secular life has been committed to the church by the secular society itself. When this happens the church has undertaken a secular obligation which is to be fulfilled with the instrumentalities granted by the civil secular society. If the job is not properly done, the civil society has every right to bring a charge against the church of a breach of contract. However, I do not think that this hypothesis is real anywhere in the world in which we now live. I know of no civil society today which has given the supervision of the social order to any church. Hence I say flatly today the church has no direct responsibility for the civil order anywhere because this concern lies outside the area of the church's direct action. With this said, however, I must also affirm that the church has a *preoccupation* with the social order of the secular world. It cannot be indifferent to it.

The church cannot be blamed for secular social structure nor has it the obligation to plan, control or revise it.

The secular social order belongs to the secular dimension of man and therefore it looks to a dynamism other than the church for its being and efficiency. Sacral and secular authority, however, live in one and the same world, one and the same man is both sacral and secular, simultaneously under the directives of church and secular society.

The church is not the *saeculum*, but it lives, works and thinks *in saeculo*. It is of eternity, but in that sector of eternity which is fused with time. No matter what the secular power does or does not do, the church must teach its own concept of social fellowship and must demand that in its own closed community such a vision be respected and, as far as human fragility permits, be actualized. This will be conditioned, of course, by the secular component of human life. All religions—which in this address I call the church—teach ascetical self-control, at least to the degree of effective submission to just law even when the law is purely secular. All religions believe in the virtues of equity, sobriety and honesty. All religions somehow have a vision of the universal fellowship of men. These virtues contribute immensely to a beneficent secular social order. Where these virtues thrive the secular social order is healthy and dynamic. Police power cannot produce these virtues, but the church can inculcate them better than any other agency.

The fatal enemy of any social order is individual and collective selfishness. The church, because it teaches man that he is not the Lord but under the Lord, necessarily strives to inculcate unselfishness. Unselfishness can exist in men who are not orientated to God. But such men are few. For the generality, religion alone engenders an atmosphere of unselfishness. The energy of the church is of great importance, therefore, to the well-being of the secular social order. Hence, secular powers, for their own ends, should foster the work of the church which itself is not for their end.

The church promotes virtue without primarily intending the good of secular society. It does so only because it

is the will of God, the Lord of both the church and of secular society. Even if secular society were totally uninterested the church would still have the mission of preaching virtue. The church in just being the church helps secular society by way of by-product. The church, therefore, must do its own work. In doing its own work for no secular purpose it aids the secular society. That society has no right to ask the church to do more.

Church meddling in the secular order has brought grief both to the churches and to secular societies. We must not secularize the church either in the name of the church or in the name of the secular community which is precisely the temptation which faces us in America. Under no circumstances should an unbelieving secular society for its own ends use the church which, by constitution and dedication, is above the secular society's concern. What is more, the church in her prophetic role as the spokesman of God must prophesy to the secular community. The church must stoutly condemn the world's injustices, not only in the abstract, but in the concrete, and preach to the world the true concept of man as seen in divine revelation. Such prophecy will rarely be accepted and usually the prophet will receive the prophet's reward—persecution and stoning.

We must not enlist the church, a community of believers, in a campaign to save the secular society or enhance its power. This the church cannot do. As men interested in the secular good of our secular society, we must see that all we can do is urge the church to be genuinely herself. When she is that, by way of by-product, good will adhere to the secular society in which the church is only a lodger.

The Kingdom of God to which the church is committed will come only by God's power and not by the vitiated strength of man. The Kingdom of God will come not *in saeculo* but when that saeculum is finished.

Address of Rabbi Emil L. Fackenheim

A JEWISH VIEW

I

If there is a single religious affirmation which, first coming with Judaism into the world, has remained basic to Jewish belief until today, it is that the God on high loves widows and orphans below; and that He commands men, from on high, to do His will in the social order below. Elsewhere, too, men have had an awareness of the Divine, and a sense of responsibility in the social realm. It was the distinctive contribution of the Hebrew prophets to proclaim that the two cannot be rent apart; that men ought to treat each other as created in the image of a God who challenges them to this task.

II

It is in the light of this basic affirmation that I must seek to answer the question concerning religious responsibility for the social order. And I must begin by opposing all attempts to tear asunder what the prophetic affirmation joins together; that is, on the one hand, a secularism which bids religion mind its business, of which responsibility for the social order is to be no part, and, on the other hand, an otherworldly religion which, accepting this advice, disclaims all responsibility for the social order. Forms of such divorce have existed in all ages. That they may exist in one and the same person has been terribly illustrated in our own time,—by those Germans who thought it possible to be Nazis and Christians at once.

I must stress that opposing divorce between the religious and the social realm is by no means equivalent to rejecting the separation between church and state, of which more below. I must stress, too, that secularist social morality

has often put to shame a social morality supposedly religiously inspired; that those rejecting or suspending belief in God have often done His will toward men more perfectly than those professing belief in Him. And this fact must give us pause. Even so, one may question whether secularist morality can, for long, treat men as created in the image of a God in Whom it does not believe; whether it can forever resist the temptation to reduce man, from an end in himself, to a mere means, thus degenerating either into a merely relativistic morality, or else—and worse—into one resting on pseudo-absolutes, such as the interests of a deified class, nation or state.

The dangers of divorce between the religious and the social may seem remote to North Americans, who tend to be practical in religion and religiously-inspired in their social morality; and indeed, for the worst examples of divorce we must surely look elsewhere. Still, we are by no means exempt from danger. For a religious civilization such as ours invites a secularism assuming a pseudo-religious garb; and hence religion, meant to be openness to the divine imperative, may become a device for avoiding it. Thus, for example, those who begin by responding to the divine imperative, with a dedication to freedom and democracy, may end up deifying their dedication; and to the extent to which they in fact do so their actual dedication—as well as what it is dedicated to—is perverted. Of this danger, there are ominous indications in our time.

III

So much for the divorce between the religious and the social, which the prophetic imperative bids us oppose. What of their relation, which that imperative bids us affirm? This question, unlike the former, is fraught with great difficulty. And its essential cause is that, while the prophetic imperative is divine, the social world in which it is to find realization is human; and the human world has characteristics which render complex, not only any attempt to *realize* the prophetic imperative, but even any attempt—such as the

present—merely to *state* it, in terms concrete enough to be applicable. Three characteristics must here be noted.

(1) All social organization involves power. But power is amoral before it can be made moral, and presumably it always retains aspects of amorality or even immorality. This fact confronts those who would heed the prophetic imperative with a dilemma. They may either forswear all use of power, in order to remain true to the prophetic imperative. But then they condemn their own efforts to ineffectiveness, at least beyond the most private relations and in the social order as a whole; and thus they contribute either to total anarchy or else—more likely—to an amoral order based on naked power. Yet most forms of social order are better than anarchy, and a partly moralized order better than one not moralized at all. Alternatively, they may seek power, for the sake of the prophetic imperative which demands realization. But then they must recognize that they become compromised in its use; and their religious motivation is no protection against such compromise. Indeed, experience shows that power wielded in the name of God is subject to special perversions.

This is why those who are organized by commitment to the prophetic imperative cannot, on the one hand, escape their responsibility of moralizing power, while on the other hand they must resist all temptations to make a bid for direct power, confining themselves to indirect methods of pressure-by-exhortation. Here lies perhaps the deepest justification for the American principle of the separation of state and church.

(2) What must be the content of such exhortation? May religion advocate specific measures in the name of God, leaving to the state and society the task of their enactment? Here I come upon a second complexity of the human condition, which makes such a neat arrangement impossible. This is that concrete moral ends are, in the actual human situation, in conflict both with other ends and with the means required to enact them. I cannot think of a single

moral and religious end, concrete enough to be directly applicable, and yet valid without exception. Thus believing all human life to be sacred I believe all wars to be evil; and yet I must admit that some wars had justly to be fought. But the concept of "just war" does not supply me with universally applicable criteria. Again, though believing in the Biblical injunction to be fruitful and multiply I cannot deduce from this belief the universal wrongness of artificial birth control. For I must measure the Biblical injunction against the dangers of overpopulation and mass-starvation. In short, I find myself unable to subscribe to what has been called the natural law, supplying us with a knowledge of right and wrong sufficiently concrete to be directly applicable, and yet valid regardless of time and circumstances.

(3) Must religion, then, confine itself to the affirmation of abstract principles, leaving to other forces not merely the task of enactment but also that of specific application? Is religion confined to affirming in general the sacredness of life and liberty, and the evil of exploitation, but barred from taking a specific stand as to when life may be taken and liberty curtailed; and as to what constitutes a just minimum wage? Here we come upon this further characteristic of the human condition, that the moral and religious conscience of a society is manifest, not in an abstract affirmation of liberty or condemnation of exploitation, but in what it protests against, as constituting a case of curtailed liberty, or a case of exploitation. Relevancy lies in the particular. As for the general, this is apt to be invoked not only by the indifferent but even by the enemy; peace has been invoked by the mongers of war, freedom and democracy, by their worst foes. This tendency to hypocrisy is evident throughout human history. But, as George Orwell has shown with such depressing persuasiveness, not until the Twentieth Century have men made it into a system.

Another neat arrangement of the respective responsibilities of religion and society for the social order has thus collapsed. A religion which confines itself to general principles condemns itself to ineffectiveness and innocuousness.

The Hebrew prophets, in contrast, were neither innocuous nor ineffective. And this was because they asserted the will of God, not in terms of abstract general principles, but in and for the here and now.

IV

In the light of these reflections, how, then, can I link, positively and concretely, prophetic religion to its responsibilities for the social order? The link is found, I think, not in rules or principles but in a believing attitude.

This believing attitude must, first, stubbornly insist that the will of God is to be done in the social world of man, and that we are responsible for our share in it. It must resist the temptation, born of the frustrations of all ages and especially of our own, of escaping into dualism, whether into a divine world above, unconcerned with man, or into a human world below, unconcerned with God and hence not really human.

This believing attitude must, first, stubbornly insist that will of God, not in general, or for some other place and time, but here and now. There is no situation which is morally and religiously neutral. There is no power-struggle, however necessarily Machiavellian, which is not at the same time a situation in which the prophetic imperative speaks to us. And even the thunder of nuclear tests must not be allowed to drown its voice.

Thirdly, the prophetic imperative, being divine, must be taken with radical seriousness, not given mere half-hearted and niggardly concessions. It is one thing to be forced to compromise in the struggle against war, oppression, discrimination and poverty, and to accept such compromises temporarily and with an aching heart. It is another thing entirely to mistake what are at best incomplete achievements finally and self-righteously, as if they were perfect. This believing attitude can never forget that so long

as the divine image is violated even in one single human being, the Kingdom of God on earth is incomplete.

Fourthly, this believing attitude knows that while the prophetic imperative is divine even our best efforts to respond to it are only human. And this is true not only of our organized forms of acting but also of our organized forms of belief, doctrine and preaching. Society and religion, even at their best, are under the judgment of God.

Finally and most importantly, this believing attitude knows that while we have our responsible share in the doing of God's will in the social world of man, the fate of that world is not in our hands alone. Throughout the ages, those committed to the prophetic imperative have always been threatened by despair, when faced with the discrepancy between what ought to be and what is. This danger assumes unheard-of proportions in a world confronted with possibilities of total destruction. Today, more than ever, one can heed the prophetic imperative with any kind of confidence only if one heeds it with an ultimate confidence; with the confidence in a God who, while bidding us to work in His world, is also its absolute Sovereign.

DISCUSSION

QUESTION: A leading banker once made the statement that if the economically illiterate clergy don't stop palling around with the churchly-illiterate politicians, they will lead us straight down the road to Communism. Do you agree that there is such a danger or not?

DR. PELIKAN: It is always interesting to observe that the strongly-held opinion that the church should stay out of politics is the reaction of those whose political opinion or economic opinion has in some sense been pinched by a church declaration. Without seeking to support all of these declarations, I think one would want to endorse, nevertheless, the Church's *right*, indeed the Church's *obligation*, to make these declarations. In all periods of the Church's history the Church has been criticized for opposing the popular or at least the majority view or—let us say in this case, the view that is espoused by those with the greatest position of power, wealth and prestige.

QUESTION: Would Dr. Pelikan expand on his statement that one can be a Protestant and not a Christian?

FATHER WEIGEL: May I answer this question instead of Dr. Pelikan? I would begin first of all with an acknowledgement of the indisputable truth of Dr. Pelikan's observations about religion. There are persons who allege that they hold to the morality of Christianity but fail to accept the teachings of the religion. Fortunately today, however, we no longer believe that you can practice the morality and yet reject its doctrine or its community life of worship—a community life that is more than worship; it is an intimate fellowship. If this is true, then it is silly to ask the Church somehow to change the secular order—there being so much immorality around. The churches cannot teach morality except to their own people. The man who is an economist, for example, should also study morality. (Perhaps on this particular point

Dr. Pelikan and I would not agree, at least not one hundred per cent. I believe that something like a natural law must be taught, not as economics, but as metaeconomics). If the economist does belong to a church he must also study along with his economics the theological dimensions of economics. If this is not done, he is not going to be a theologian to begin with; nor will he be a true member of his own church community for such religious concerns will mean very little to him in his study of the science of Economics. Without religion, therefore, and his particular relation to a church, our citizen cannot expect to confront morality in the pursuit of his profession.

Let us face another thing. In a country like ours where the consensus, the real living consensus which directs our nation is necessarily the consensus of many kinds of people—people who have no religion, people who are Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Eastern Orthodox with the Protestants very well divided, up and down—how can you expect a wide consensus? Therefore, our consensus is very thin; and what can it bring forth as the moral light of a nation except a thin morality? Suddenly now to say to the churches, “Come on, come on, get behind us,” just does not make any sense. We cannot expect our citizens to follow Jewish morality or Catholic morality until they become Jewish believers and Catholic believers. It cannot be done any other way. You cannot get the fruits of the faith without faith.

DR. FACKENHEIM: I was particularly struck by the question about religion and economics because, in my original statement, I started out by saying that the prophetic imperative teaches the inseparability of the religious and the social. Let me now add, expanding somewhat, that I do not believe there is such a thing as an ultimately self-contained science of economics, that is, an economics *wholly* objective, impartial and—this is the point—neutral to values. Man is a being who lives by values, and his economics must differ according to difference in values. Even if there is an absolutely iron-clad law of supply and demand, demand still differs according to what is being valued in a society.

We need only think of things which are in demand because they are status-symbols, and of "hidden persuaders" who try to convince us that we just don't count unless our wives have mink coats, in order to realize that it is absurd to think of economic relations as morally neutral. And the notion that these relations might be manipulated by experts unconcerned with morality is a mere pseudo-scientific illusion. By the same token, religion cannot stay out of economics. So, I would say, first of all, in answer to the question, bankers and businessmen must not be morally and religiously illiterate; and those who are morally and religiously concerned with economic questions should cease to be economically illiterate.

Secondly, I cannot imagine an Amos alive today who would not involve himself in economic questions. For he would want to proclaim not a mere abstract ideal of social justice. He would consider it his task to proclaim that the divine imperative applies concretely. He would surely have little use for those who would recognize abstract appeals for social justice, and then go on to consider all specific economic proposals as economic only, and outside the legitimate concern of religion and morality.

I would certainly agree with Father Weigel that the two realms—the sacred and the secular—are separate. At the same time, this indicates to me, as a Jew, that the world is as yet unredeemed. The separation cannot be ultimate. And while certainly men alone cannot by their own unaided power redeem the world, yet they have a duty to work toward redemption. But the degree to which men can so work is a secret in the keeping of God.

In conclusion, I would like to make a brief comment on Father Weigel's statement that the Church can teach morality only to its own believers, and on Dr. Pelikan's observation concerning Protestants who are not Christians.

I certainly think that there is much truth in both observations. And I am familiar with Jews who think they

are perfectly good Jews even if they are only concerned with the moral aspects of Judaism. At the same time, I wonder if both Father Weigel and Dr. Pelikan would not agree that there is a positive aspect as well as the negative one which they have stressed. Would not a prophet such as Amos, living today, go out and talk to anybody wherever he might be found, in the pub and in the market place, regardless of whether he is either a member of his own religious group or a secularist? And might he not find that many a secularist is not so secularistic after all: that, possibly, unknown to himself, he has a secret longing for God?

QUESTION: For too many people religion has become merely a matter of the observance of form, whereas in my opinion religion ought to stimulate people to think. It ought to challenge the people. I would rather listen to a minister who would disturb me than one who thinks he need appease some conviction or prejudice that I have been nursing through the years. But down where I live such forthrightness would be called "meddling." This accounts in part for the reaction to the National Council of Churches and various social resolutions of the denominations. So I believe that the Church ought to do something; but this means an educated clergy that knows how to put the facts before the Church more plainly. We need a clergy that will know the facts before they speak. Something ought to be done to help people think and to think with the heart and the mind of the prophet and of Jesus Christ.

DR. PELIKAN: Carl Sandburg suggests that the 11th Commandment should read "Thou shalt not commit Nincompoopery." It seems that is precisely what you are talking about; and that is why all three of us are engaged professionally specifically in the training of people to think. The problem, however, is that religion has always meant to many people the sanctioning of the status quo. This has been one of its roles in history. It enjoys the favors of the community because community leadership anticipates that religion will sanctify the holy war, the present economic order, or some-

body else's alternatives for ordering the social structure. The problem of the "kept" theologian has always been a very serious one in the history of the Church—the man who has finally surrendered the integrity of theological and moral judgment to some master who pays his keep. If there were enough people in the pew waiting to be disturbed, as you say you are, then things would be quite different. I can promise you that some of us are doing our best to see to it that the clergy who preach to you will disturb you whether you ask them or not.

FATHER WEIGEL: We should ask the Church to be genuinely herself. This we have a right to ask, that the Church be the Church and tell the truths we need to hear whether we like to hear them or not.

QUESTION: Just a few weeks ago one of America's great religious leaders addressed a group of us here in Washington. He had just returned from the West Coast. He told us how clergymen and professors in California cities have been harassed for their moral forthrightness. Someone connected with the John Birch Society would call up in a community and say such and such a minister is a Communist, such and such a professor is a Communist. Then the wife of the professor or clergyman would receive anonymous telephone calls—"Your husband is a Communist." The children of the professor or clergyman on going to school would be confronted by their classmates who would say to them "Your father is a Communist." I'd like to ask our three speakers to define their understanding of religion's social responsibility in the face of such intimidation?

DR. PELIKAN: I was in California two weeks ago also and received many reports of precisely this same sort of thing. I think the point of Father Weigel's main address is relevant here. Under pressure from international Communism, it is very easy for the very people who have always said the Church should stay out of politics now to demand that the Church should speak out more strongly against the

Communists and its myths and develop a strong anti-Communist program. The Church's main contribution to the fight against Communism, however, is the preaching of the word of God and the administration of the sacraments. The Church is most effective in its war against Communism by being the Church and by drawing from its central message and program the implications that are to be drawn for the contemporary state of believers in the world. It is very easy to regard this as "old stuff" and to rush off instead into an anti-Communist crusade. But in this, they deflect the churches from their principal responsibility. If I were a Communist I would pray that the Church stop being the Church and become an anti-Communist society.

QUESTION: Can we envisage a total morality, an all-encompassing morality? There is something that sounds divisive in a Jewish morality and a Christian morality.

FATHER WEIGEL: It's the word divisive that needs underlining—You see you cannot help it. If you are a Jew you are divided from the Catholics; if you are a Catholic you are divided from the Jew; they are two different visions of reality. We are a pluralistic society and consequently we have decided to live with our divisions, to get out of our divisions as much of community as we can without destroying the division. This is what we mean by a pluralistic society. If you ask me, a Catholic, "Could we make one morality of Hebrew and Christian morality?", I should say, "Certainly, the Catholic Church did so." Do you think that answer is going to get very far? No. Let's face it. In their totalities, as they stand now, they are not the same. We can take just a single illustrative point that was mentioned this afternoon. The Catholic Church has a definite view on birth control which Professor Fackenheim does not share. We live in a pluralistic society—from the point of view of such a society, Dr. Fackenheim has every right not to share my views. If, however, in my own community I were to propose such a view, my opponents would have every right to take the proper steps to deflect my effort. We will not, therefore, be able to take two entirely different faith visions

—even if they are not entirely different and have much in common, and produce from them a single morality. This is precisely the significance, however, of the formal Catholic notion of natural law. In this notion it is held that secular society, no matter what its formal religion or lack of it, can get together on a conception of natural law that holds outside of the realm of mere religious affiliation.

THEOLOGY LIBRARY
CLAREMONT, CALIF.
A104 28

National Conference of Christians and Jews

43 West 57 Street

New York 19, N. Y.

The project Religious Freedom and Public Affairs is designed to raise the general level of public understanding and discussion on issues of public concern about which religious groups differ. The main objectives of this project are: to analyze the practical and theoretical problems involving political action and religious freedom; to effectuate a greater understanding of the significance of those religious commitments that affect public policy; and to lessen needless conflict created by different religious approaches to social problems.

BV
630.2 **National Conference of Christians and Jews. *Religious Freedom and Public Affairs Project.***

N3
1962 Religious responsibility for the social order, a symposium by three theologians: Jaroslav Pelikan, Gustavo Weigel (and) Emil L. Fackenheim. (New York, National Conference of Christians and Jews (1962),

24 p. 23 cm.

Speeches given at the annual meeting of the National Conference of Christians and Jews, held in Washington, Nov. 18 and 19, 1962.

1. Church and state. 2. Social ethics. I. Pelikan, Jaroslav, 1923-
II. Title.

BV630.2.N3 1962

63-2325

CCSC/els

A10498

THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE
OF CHRISTIANS & JEWS, INC
3335 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles 5, California

